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CIA's Latin Connections

Mexico City

Former Costa Rican President Jose Figueres says he has worked for the Central Intelligency Agency in "20,000 ways" and believes other Latin American leaders have done the same.

Figueres admitted being "mixed up in" the CIA-planned Bay of Pigs invasion against Cuba and attempts to overthrow the late Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo.

But the 68-year-old Costa Rican said he tried to get the CIA to call off the Cuban invasion and argued against the assassination of Trujillo.

Figueres, interviewed Sunday on a Mexican television program, said he helped American Intelligence "all over Latin America" for 30 years, even before the CIA came into existence.

"I have worked in 20,000 ways," he said. "I do not want to get any more explicit."

Figures, a three-time president and one of the leaders of the "Democratic left: in Latin America, was asked if it's common for the region's leaders to collaborate with the CIA.

"I believe so,: he said. "I believe so. It is a political reaity as strong as the Vatican."

He said he "neither approved nor disapproved" of such actions by any Latin American president. "Poitics and war are not conducted under rules laid down for nuns in convents," he said.

"This is a savage world. I have no illusions," Figueres said. "I am not a man of white gloves."

He complained, however, of the CIA tapping his telephones "many times" and said the intelligencye agency "frustrated" many of his attempts to combat Latin American revolutionaries.

But he defended the CIA against its critics, saying, "there never can be enough payment to the United States for the excellent espionage and counterespionage work of the CIA since it was founded by Allen Dulles."

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